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DD/P 1-3000

28 June 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Training
SUBJECT : Senior Operations Seminar

1. Background:

25X1A You will recall that in November 1966 you chaired a conference on the long-discussed "advanced" Operations Seminar. At that conference (attended by [REDACTED] and the undersigned) you raised several questions concerning the proposal as then constituted. Specifically, you perceived a need to define more precisely both the target audience and the objectives of the seminar. Moreover, the skeletal syllabus, presented at the time as a basis for discussion, appeared, in your view, to vacillate between general survey and very specific topics. Finally, you counselled against an indiscriminate, grab-bag approach to course content. While these points were partially clarified during the conference itself, it was nevertheless agreed that only a comprehensive survey of appropriate CS personnel could precisely determine whether the need for such a seminar really exists and, if so, to what and whom it should be directed. Accordingly, a survey (interrupted for work on the CS Desk Orientation course and other commitments) was begun, with a memorandum from DDP/TRO announcing the survey and enlisting the cooperation of DD/P training officers and branch chiefs. Please see Attachment A.

2. Results in Brief:

As indicated in the cited DDP/TRO memorandum, the undersigned was prepared to explain further the rationale behind the proposed seminar (and was usually asked to do so) and to solicit the opinions of those interviewed. Needless to say, no attempt was made to promote the seminar;

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25X1A rather, an effort was made to explore needs and wishes in an objective and realistic fashion. In essence, the reaction to the idea of an operations seminar for mid-career officers was overwhelmingly favorable, even after properly discounting for the fact that few would be inclined to oppose in principle such an accepted and worthy enterprise as education. As might be expected, there was less agreement in regard to the details of implementing the proposal, and each individual's suggestions were naturally informed by his own experience. Thus, there was a great variety of useful and cogent comments. Perhaps the best way to convey the substance and flavor of these comments is to provide a composite paraphrase of the views of some [REDACTED] Chiefs interviewed in the survey. Before providing such a resume in the following paragraph, one observation, regarding a phenomenon which was so common as to be striking, should be mentioned. The people interviewed usually began by claiming that they may well have taken less formal training than anyone else in the Agency. This statement, which seemed to reflect a sort of perverse pride, rapidly gave way in almost every case to an evangelical exhortation about the need for more training and a somewhat rueful complaint of having been personally neglected. This revealing syndrome invariably followed an examination of the Attachment B chart which compares the training background of the typical prospective Seminar student with the comprehensive education currently afforded our Career Trainees.

3. Composite Synopsis of Survey:

The following--primarily in paraphrase but often verbatim--has been knitted together from the statements and recommendations of operations officers interviewed.

a. There is little question but that a gap exists in the training of officers in the mid-career generation. The GS-14's and GS-15's of today received a modicum of formal training given at a time when the Agency's overall experience was limited or, in some areas, non-existent. We have learned a great deal since, but there is regrettably no provision for systematically transmitting the benefit of one's own experience to others or for receiving the benefit of theirs. (Studies and book dispatches just don't do the job, although, ironically, the best and busiest officers are just the ones who create the time for reading such valuable studies.) While neglecting the further training of our regular officers, we

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seem, by contrast, to be overdoing the training of CT's beyond their capacity to absorb. But it is the mid-career generation--the GS-13's, 14's, and 15's--who are largely responsible for running in the Field and supporting at Headquarters the operations of the Clandestine Services. It is amazing that such short shrift has been given to their continued training.

b. Everyone's career development is one-sided to some degree, and we tend to become specialists through either preference or chance. An operations seminar of this sort could help fill in experience gaps, if only vicariously, and thus enhance the versatility of our officers--exactly those who, by virtue of grade, are often moving into positions of general responsibility cutting across FI/CI/CA lines.

c. More and more areas of the world are becoming at least less permissive and at worst actively hostile toward CIA operations. Hence, it behooves us to operate at an ever higher level of professionalism. Two decades of experience and the impressive technical and material resources at our command go a long way toward providing the prerequisites to conducting operations in such a manner, but another element must be added if we are to achieve our real potential, namely: a means for transmitting to the individual officer the collective experience of the organization. Exchange and sharing of experience, through which such infusion takes place, is currently hit or miss and wholly inadequate. Only at regional Chiefs of Station conferences do we employ this proven learning method.¹

d. Candor must be the hallmark of the proposed seminar, if it is to be successful. Seminar leaders should be catalysts talking provocatively on important and timely topics, not

¹This statement was, of course, made prior to and without knowledge of the recent [REDACTED] Seminar which aims at the type of exchange advocated by the speaker. Naturally, this does not lessen the validity of the observation; quite the contrary, it tends to enhance it.

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Moreover, the proposed seminar competes for personnel with the Midcareer Executive Development Course. Since, once freed for training, people can be spared from their jobs with less dislocation, perhaps the Midcareer Course and the operations seminar could best be run consecutively. Alternatively, the seminar could be scheduled immediately upon a person's return to Headquarters from abroad or just prior to an overseas assignment.

4. Results Evaluated:

What did the survey reveal which was helpful in resolving the points you previously raised and in refining our own thinking about the proposal?

a. Target: While definition of "mid-career" personnel is somewhat arbitrary (depending upon whether one has rank or career chronology in mind), the target audience should consist of CS officers in the GS-13 through GS-15 range. This group is composed primarily of officers who entered the Agency when it was very young, when operational training was comparably basal, and before the JOT/CT program was begun. These officers are, in a real sense, the backbone of the Clandestine Services and will continue to be so for at least a decade. However, the vagaries of timing and the historical development of the Agency (including that of OTR and the CTP) have inadvertently tended to deny this very group the further training needed and desired to sustain the type of professionalism indispensable in today's operational climate.³ Of equal

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importance perhaps is the fact that, because of time pressures and for other reasons, these officers have not always availed themselves of existing training opportunities.

b. Content: Although many topics were mentioned by those surveyed as suitable for the seminar (sometimes these seemed to be offhand suggestions based on the most recent troublesome matter recalled), there was a rather astonishing consensus regarding the importance of the subjects cited in sub-paragraph 3.f. above. Some officers felt that considerable flexibility should be built into the course so that items of current major interest could be included as appropriate. For obvious reasons, covert funding was mentioned in this connection. It became clear, however, that only the overview obtained for a survey of the sort conducted and the resultant culling and synthesis of suggestions made can be the basis for a course schedule responsive to overall CS needs. The individuals interviewed had their own--sometimes parochial--perspective and, oddly enough, OTR is now in a better position to state overall CS needs than are individual CS officers. Incidentally, there was considerable but not overwhelming interest in a brief introductory survey of current operational trends and highlights in the area and special divisions as a framework for the rest of the seminar.

c. Format: There was no agreement whatsoever on the administrative aspects of the seminar. Some felt strongly that it should be full time and divorced as much as possible from everyday work and pressures--indeed, if possible, removed from Washington. Others felt just as strongly that it should be run on a part-time basis at the Headquarters Building. Similarly, some officers recommended taping of the seminar sessions, while others maintained strongly that recording would greatly inhibit participants and be self-defeating of the purposes of the seminar. Obviously, decisions on format and mechanics of the seminar must be made by OTR on the basis of our own experience and judgment; there is no appreciable conformity on these matters among the prospective participants.

5. The above findings result from a survey based on the concept of a broad-gauged two-week seminar and, it is felt, are useful, enlightening, and valid. Nevertheless, for several reasons, including some of these

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very findings, it is deemed advisable at this juncture to shift somewhat our earlier terms of reference. Many of the branch chiefs interviewed raised the problem of non-availability of personnel, a problem which will most probably persist for the foreseeable future. This hard fact must be faced in making a concrete proposal. Also, in the meantime, careful consideration has been given to the points you previously raised and our own thinking in the Operations School has since evolved and crystallized in a somewhat different form. Finally, as you will remember, special attention was recommended in the draft syllabus for the priority targets: the USSR and China. Since then the mandatory SB Operations Course has been created, and it has, of course, thereby pre-empted a sizeable chunk of our seminar ground. None of the foregoing factors offset the intrinsic validity of the survey findings nor negate the fact that a significant training gap has been identified which affects Agency performance in an increasingly demanding period. However, the foregoing factors do mean that the original proposal of last Fall no longer fits into current realities and that an alternative proposal, presented below, now suggests itself as more sensible and practicable.

6. It is proposed that OTR, in conjunction with appropriate CS elements, devise and run a series of short, self-contained Operations Seminars on specific single topics. These seminars would vary in length--perhaps from half a day to three days--depending upon the nature of the topic. Initially, at least, the seminars should be on a special announcement, ad hoc basis. They should be carefully prepared, respond to particular and concrete needs, and engage as speaker-catalysts the most authoritative officers we can find. Moreover, at first we might well select and identify student participants individually with the help of the Divisions and Staffs, and conduct sufficient advance briefing of these to ensure productive exchange by all. ⁺As the seminars become known, accepted, and--it is hoped--awaited, and if future personnel and other circumstances permit, we might eventually think in terms of a consecutive series of such self-contained seminars, in effect, reverting somewhat to the original concept. But that is merely retaining an option for the future; for now we should think in terms of single, specialized seminars.

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7. To inaugurate the series it is recommended that OTR sponsor

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